

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

Sub A2 1. A document management system comprising a plurality of computer systems coupled together by a network, at least one of said computer systems delivering an electronic document attached with a signature image for authorizing said electronic document by a signer, a document data storage system coupled to said network for storing said electronic document supplied from said at least one of said computer systems, and an attest data storage system coupled to said network for storing said signature image, said document data storage system storing bar codes of a document number of the electronic document stored in said document data storage system and an ID number of said attest data storage system storing said attest data, said attest data storage system storing bar codes of said document number and an ID number of said document data storage system.

2. The document management system as defined in claim 1, wherein said attest data storage system stores bar codes of an ID number of the signer and serial usage number by the signer in association with said codes of said document number.

3. The document management system as defined in claim 2, wherein said electronic document is attached with a plurality of said signature images of signers registered in separate attest data storage systems.

4. A document management system for use in a computer system network system comprising:

5 a document data storage system coupled to said network for storing document data including an electronic document and at least one attest data in association therewith, said attest data including a registered signature image data used for approval of the electronic document by a signer; and

10 an attest data storage system, coupled to said document data storage system by a network, for storing said attest data and supplying said attest data to said document data storage system upon request and/or approval by the signer.

5 5. The document management system as defined in claim 4, wherein said document data storage system and said attest data storage system store ID numbers of said attest data storage system and said document data storage system, respectively.

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6. The document management system as defined in claim 4, wherein said document data storage system receives said signature image from said attest data storage system upon approval by the signer.

7. The document management system as defined in claim 6, wherein said document data storage system request said attest data storage system to deliver said signature image data based on an ID number of the signer.

8. The document management system as defined in claim 4, wherein said document data storage system stores said electronic document in association with an ID number of said attest data storage system and an ID number of the signer, and said attest data storage system stores said signature image in association with an ID number of said document data storage system and an ID number of the signer.

9. A method for managing an electronic document in a computer network system comprising the steps of registering a signature image data in association with a signer ID number, temporarily storing primary document data including an electronic document having therein a signature image, in association with the signer ID number, transferring

the registered signature image data based on the signer ID number in the primary document data, and attaching the registered signature image data to the primary document data to complete a secondary document data to be stored.

10. The method as defined in claim 9, wherein said secondary document data includes a system ID number of a system registering said signature image data.

11. The method as defined in claim 10, further comprising the step of storing a system ID number of a system storing said secondary document data in association with the registered signature image data.

12. The method as defined in claim 9, further comprising, before transferring the registered signature image data, the steps of obtaining approval by a signature signing the signature image in the electronic document.